

MASSACHUSETTS  
40 main st, suite 301  
florence, ma 01062  
tel 413.585.1533  
fax 413.585.8904

WASHINGTON  
1025 connecticut ave. nw, suite 1110  
washington, dc 20036  
tel 202.265.1490  
fax 202.265.1489



February 1, 2017

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 Twelfth Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: WC Docket No. 16-245, 2016 Broadband Progress Report**  
**WC Docket No. 11-42, Lifeline and Linkup Reform and Modernization**  
**WC Docket No. 10-90, Connect America Fund**  
**GN Docket No. 09-51, National Broadband Plan**  
**GN Docket No. 14-28, Protecting and Promoting the Open Internet**  
**MB Docket No. 13-236, National Television Multiple Ownership Rule**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On Monday, January 30th, I met with David Grossman, Chief of Staff and Media Policy Advisor to Commissioner Clyburn, and Claude Aiken, the Commissioner's Legal Advisor for Wireline issues.

The bulk of the meeting focused on Free Press's concerns with Chairman Pai's nascent proposals to address the digital divide. Those concerns were summarized more fully in our letter of January 31, 2017, filed yesterday in several of the above-captioned dockets and attached here as an exhibit. As that filing detailed, we suspect that corporate tax breaks for networks that are already going to build would do nothing to solve the primary cause of the digital divide.

That primary problem is a lack of adoption, not an utter lack of deployment for the vast majority of the United States population. And adoption lags because of the high prices and unreasonable terms for unaffordable broadband offerings that constitute the only option in far too many communities. As reported in our December 2016 paper "Digital Denied: The Impact of Systemic Racial Discrimination on Home-Internet Adoption," members of communities of color are the most acutely affected by this lack of affordability and by other structural barriers to adoption as well. Such barriers have a significant impact on adoption even once we account for income differences between different racial and ethnic demographic groups.

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, I also touched briefly on two other general subjects, including the Commission's Open Internet rules. There, I noted Free Press's contention – and the D.C. Circuit's ruling upholding it – that Title II remains the best basis (and indeed, the only basis) of authority available to the Commission at this time for real Net Neutrality rules.

On the specific topic of exemptions to the Open Internet Order's "enhanced transparency" rules for self-styled "small ISPs," however, I explained that these providers had not proven the alleged burdens of complying with those rules. Nor have such providers articulated a reason that customers of ISPs with several hundred thousand customers should deserve less transparent information about the broadband services they buy each month than do customers of larger companies. I referenced the arguments made in Free Press's December 11, 2015 filing to this effect. That filing is also attached as an exhibit hereto.

Finally, with respect to media ownership rules, I highlighted the opposition recently filed by Free Press and allies to petitions for reconsideration of the 2016 UHF Discount order. Without summarizing that opposition or other positions taken by Free Press in various quadrennial review proceedings, I affirmed the continued need for rules safeguarding competition, localism, and diversity both nationally and in local media markets too.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew F. Wood  
Policy Director  
mwood@freepress.net